Abstract

In early Singapore, the arriving of Christianity to the island was regarded as a foreign religion trying to plant its roots here. Like all cultures when being introduced into a new area, there would be difficulties to be overcome and changes to be made in certain aspects of the culture in order to ensure its survival. This honours thesis traces the spread and development of Christianity in the Singapore Chinese community from 1900 to 1940.

Few studies have been undertaken on the spread and development of Christianity within the Chinese community in Singapore. Hence, my primary aim is to explain the following:

1) The initial problems and resistance faced by the missionaries when they were trying to break into the Chinese community;
2) Different ways and means they employed in spreading the gospels, while trying to break up the resistance the Chinese had towards them;
3) The secularization of Christianity towards the Chinese culture in order to bring in more converts and to ensure its survival in the Chinese community.

This thesis adopts an approach to the topic set in a cultural framework. It begins by treating Christianity as a representation of a Western culture and interpretes the coming of Christianity as a culture rather than as a religion only.

My study has led to the observation that in any cultural exchange, the process has to take place naturally. Conflicts are inevitable but with
time and efforts made, understandings can be reached. Different degrees of accommodation need to be made during the process. The planting of one religion into foreign soil takes time, as with the implementation of any cultural value from abroad.